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[LORD WADE.]

parliamentary life in both Houses. I agree with him about the dangers inherent in the present system.

That brings me, after that rapid survey, to the winding up by the noble and learned Lord, Lord Mackay of Clashfern. I should like to thank him for his reply. May I mention one small point: it was a narrow majority on the Select Committee, but it was a rather more substantial majority when the matter came before the whole House, and I think that point should be noted. I understand that the Government have not yet reached a conclusion. As to talks, the noble and learned Lord used the expression, "in due course". Those words are used frequently in both Houses of Parliament. I have never found a precise definition of the meaning of "in due course". I hope that it means early. With that, I should like to thank all those who have taken part. I beg to move that this Bill be given a Second Reading.

On Question, Bill read 2ª, and committed to a Committee of the Whole House.

East Timor

6.30 p.m.

Lord Avebury rose to ask Her Majesty's Government what is their policy on the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, and whether they will publish the documents relating to this matter, including those which have been leaked to various Australian and British newspapers.

The noble Lord said: My Lords, I begin by expressing my warmest appreciation to the noble Lord, Lord Trefgarne, for coming here this evening to answer this debate when I am aware that the car in which he was a passenger was involved in a serious accident and that the driver of it was badly injured. I hope the driver will make a quick recovery and that the noble Lord will not suffer any long-term effects. I am indeed grateful to him after such an unpleasant experience for coming to the House immediately to answer this debate.

The week before last the *New Statesman* published some extracts from secret documents which they claimed showed the complicity of Britain, Australia and the United States in the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia. They said it looked as though Britain and her allies, while in public making the right noises about self-determination for the people of East Timor, were secretly at the same time actively encouraging the Indonesians in their aggression.

Before the Portuguese withdrew, leaving a vacuum in the territory, all those with a finger in the pie made categorical statements recording their determination that the people of East Timor should decide their future for themselves. The Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Mr. Adam Malik, wrote to one of the leaders of Fretilin, the Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente, Mr. Jose Ramos Horta, on 17th June 1974 saying:

> "The independence of every country is the right of every nation, with no exception for the people of East Timor".

The Portuguese Minister for Interterritorial Co-ordination, Mr. Almeida Santos, during a visit to East Timor in October 1974, pledged:

> "Timor will be what the majority of its people want it to be".

Then, in August 1975 civil war broke out between Fretilin and the Democratic Union of Timor, UDT, which also advocated independence, but with some qualifications. By the end of September, Fretilin was in *de facto* control of the whole country, the Portuguese authorities having by them withdrawn. The Fretilin leadership called for the election of a constituent assembly in 1976, leading to *de jure* independence. The Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Gough Whitlam, criticised Portugual saying that, as the occupying power, it should accept responsibility instead of

> "clearing out and dropping its bundle".

That view was later endorsed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Conservative coalition which took over in Australia in December 1975. But the Indonesians, Portuguese and Australians were unanimous in opposing a handover of power to Fretilin without involving the other two Parties—UDT, which I have already mentioned, and Apodeti, which stood for integration with Indonesia, though there was practically no discernible support for that policy.

After the end of the civil war, order was restored and the Fretilin Administration was universally accepted, according to those who went to the territory, although severe economic disruption had been caused by the conflict. At the end of September fighting started again on the border with Indonesia. The Indonesian authorities claimed that none of their own forces were involved but only the remnants of UDT and Apodeti who had fled into Indonesia after their defeat. But they refused to allow any foreign observers to visit the Indonesian side of the border with East Timor.

It was in December 1975 that Indonesian forces began a full-scale invasion of East Timor. Mr. Kissinger had given them the green light, having said on 4th December, during a visit to Jakarta in the company of the then President Ford, that the United States would not recognise independent East Timor and that they understood Indonesia's position on the question. Three days later Indonesian forces landed in Dili to begin a campaign which was to be marked by atrocities worse than any committed during the Japanese occupation, and according to the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr. Adam Malik,

> "50,000 or perhaps 80,000 people might have been killed during the war in East Timor. It was war . . . Then what is the big fuss?"

What was the attitude of the British Government? On 13th November 1975 the noble Lord, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, wrote to Mrs. Sheila Oakes of the National Peace Council, saying:

> "We continue to support attempts to reach a solution based on self-determination for the people of the territory . . . The Indonesians as well as the Portuguese have continued their efforts to settle matters peacefully".

After the invasion, the noble Lord wrote to Mr. Hugh Dykes, MP, explicitely denying an assertion that we had supported Indonesian policy. Not only had he himself conveyed to the Indonesian Ambassador in London our deep concern at Indonesian military action in Timor, but the United Kingdom representative, as President of the Security Council, had been instrumental in securing on 22nd December 1975 the unan-

imous passage of a resolution reaffirming the right of the people to self-determination and authorising the sending of a special representative of the Secretary General to the region. Incidentally, that seems to have been about the only occasion when Great Britain voted in the United Nations against Indonesian aggression and occupation of the territory of East Timor.

But what the noble Lord, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, was saying in public seems to be in sharp contrast with the glimpse of British policy given by the documents published in Australia recently, extracts from which, as I said, appeared in last week's *New Statesman*. Reference is made there to a report by Mr. Gordon Duggan, who was then head of Chancery in Jakarta, and, although the report itself is unfortunately not in the collection, the Ambassador's covering letter transmitting it to the Foreign Office is very revealing. He says:

"The people of Portuguese East Timor are in no condition to exercise the right of self-determination . . . The territory seems likely to become steadily more of a problem child, and the arguments in favour of its integration into Indonesia are all the stronger . . . Developments in Lisbon seem now to argue in favour of greater sympathy towards Indonesia should the Indonesian Government feel forced to take strong action. Certainly, as seen from here, it is in Britain's interest that Indonesia should absorb the territory as soon and as unobtrusively as possible; and that if it comes to the crunch and there is a row in the United Nations, we should keep our heads down and avoid siding against the Indonesian Government".

I am not suggesting that because the Ambassador said that it was the policy of Her Majesty's Government, but it would be valuable to know what was in the report by Mr. Duggan and what other documents are in the possession of Her Majesty's Government which did not form part of the collection which is now being published in Australia, and in particular to know whether these documents might have any bearing on the tragic death of five journalists, three Australian and two British, who were murdered by Indonesian soldiers while filming Indonesian military activities near Balibo for Sydney Channel 9 TV. An eye-witness, Mr. Guido de Santos, said that one of the newsmen was machine-gunned to death as about 300 troops entered the village where they were based, and when the others came out of the house putting their hands up shouting "Australians, Australians!", they were put up against a wall and shot. The Australians knew of the murders because they were intercepting Indonesian radio messages, among which there was a report of the killings, but it did not suit them to make a fuss. A cable of 29th October 1975 from the Australian Ambassador in Jakarta, Mr. Richard Wollcott, read:

"Although we know it is not true, the formal position of the Indonesian Government is still that there is no military intervention in East Timor. If the Minister said or implied in public that the Indonesian Government was lying, we would invite a hurt and angry reaction".

When Mr. Laurie Oakes of the *Melbourne Sun* wanted to blow open the assassination of the journalists, he was stopped by a D-Notice, a practice which the Australians have unfortunately taken over from the United Kingdom, although the news got out shortly afterwards. When Mr. Jose Ramos Horta, who was by then the Minister for External Affairs in the Government of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, visited London in February 1976 he disclosed for the first time that two of the murdered newsmen, Malcolm Rennie and Brian Peters, were United Kingdom citizens.

Incidentally, it is not for me to tell our Australian parliamentary colleagues how to handle the matter of disclosure, but if their rules on parliamentary privilege are the same as ours, then any of these documents which were read out in the Australian House of Commons would then become public property, because anything which is said in either House in the United Kingdom, as we know, may be printed in the newspapers or may be dealt with on radio or television. Assuming that the Australians have also inherited this practice, the way to get these documents into the public domain in Australia would be for those Australian parliamentarians who have an interest in making sure that the people of Australia know the truth to ventilate them in either House of the Australian Parliament.

Continuing with the history of our own involvement, Mr. David Ennals, answering a Question in another place on 18th February 1976, gave the Indonesian version of the deaths of the newsmen—that the men were sheltering in a house that was hit by mortar fire. He added that in the circumstnsces then prevailing in East Timor the Government had no way of ascertaining the precise truth. The Minister meant that he did not want to discover the truth, because if it were to have been proved that our citizens had been coldbloodedly murdered, there would have been enormous public opposition to the cynical policy of encouraging the Indonesians to annex East Timor.

I should like to ask the noble Lord—perhaps he cannot answer for the previous Government, but it must come out sooner or later—what efforts did the Government make to get at the facts. Mr. Ennals said then that we were in close touch with the Australian Government about the case. So did they obtain, for instance, from the Australian authorities transcripts of the radio messages between the Indonesian authorities in which the deaths were announced? Did they interview the eye witnesses, one of whom I have mentioned? What questions did they put to the Indonesian authorities regarding the return of the victims' effects undamaged, and how could this be reconciled with the tale about the house which they were occupying having been destroyed by mortar fire?

The other documents in this collection which I have read are all of Australian origin. It will not be denied, I believe, that we were kept fully informed by the Australians, and we knew, for instance, from the Australian Ambassador's letter of 17th August 1975, that it was:

"Settled Indonesian policy to incorporate Timor, as even Malik admitted to me on Friday".

So that at the same time as we were making all the right noises in public about self-determination, we knew of, and were conniving with, Indonesian aggression. And our record since the invasion confirms the differences between our real policies and those that we pretend to operate. While nearly a third of the population of 600,000 people of East Timor have perished by the actions of the Indonesian armed forces, and since then by deliberate starvation of the population, our representative in the United Nations accepted in April 1976 the lies of the Indonesians

[LORD AVEBURY.]

regarding the situation in the territory and their promise to withdraw from it.

Now our policy seems to be to try to forget about the whole episode. In November 1979 President Soeharto was received here and was entertained at Buckingham Palace. Great efforts are made to increase British trade with Indonesia, including trade in arms. And among the weapons that Britain is selling to Indonesia is the Hawk aircraft, which as the manufacturer's literature makes quite clear, can be used either as a trainer or in the ground attack role, by a very simple change in the field.

Of course it is said that we are selling only the trainer version, but if the manufacturers claim that it is so easy to convert, how in fact could we prevent the Indonesians from doing it themselves? In answer to a Question last April, the noble Lord, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, said that we would not sell arms to a country that was guilty of torture. Then in a later debate he corrected himself and said that it was only arms that could be used against the civilian population that we would not sell to such a régime. In yesterday's debate the noble Lord restated the Government's policy on this matter, as he put it, in clear terms. I quote from yesterday's debate; at column 415:

> " We would not sell equipment which, in our judgment, could be used for internal repression, to a régime which is known to practise torture ".

But this equipment, the Hawk aircraft, can certainly be used for internal repression. It would be an ideal weapon to use against the villages of East Timor, into which the Indonesian colonialists and aggressors have herded the population. By this simple modification in the field of adding pylons to the wings, bombs, rockets, napalm and so on could be deployed against the civilian population. I do not think it would be denied that atrocities have been practised on an enormous scale and are fully documented in, for example, the recent work of Arnold Kohen and John Taylor, *An Act of Genocide, Indonesias's Invasion of East Timor*, and in the many issues of the Tapol, the Campaign for the defence of Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Indonesia. Last July's issue, for example, included the headline: " Prisoners tortured in Aceh ". It is clear from a mass of evidence that the Indonesian Government do practise torture on an enormous scale, and yet we are still prepared to sell them these fearsome weapons.

I see that the Australian Government are going to the most extraordinary lengths to intimidate journalists who seek to expose the policies of their own Government. They are bringing an action in the English courts to force the *New Statesman* to disclose the source of the documents that it printed. They are too late to stop publication, and presumably they are hoping to make an example of the " mole ", so as to stop it happening again. But if the *New Statesman* merely took extracts from the book, which has been suppressed in Australia itself, it might be totally unaware of the identity of the source.

I say seriously to the Australian Government that many people in this country think it highly objectionable when the Home Office, the Attorney-General, or the British Steel Corporation harass and intimidate journalists, and try to prevent material of wide public interest from being disclosed. If foreign governments are now going to use the same legal weapons against journalists in this country, that seems to me to constitute a totally unwarrantable interference in the internal affairs of our country, notwithstanding the fact that the documents in question originated overseas.

Returning to the policy of our own Government, I understand that it is still officially our attitude that the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination should be upheld. Why then does the United Kingdom abstain when United Nations resolutions on this matter are put to the vote? Is it true that we have committed £10 million in aid to Indonesia in the current fiscal year, compared with only £1 million last year? If those are not the correct figures, could we perhaps be given them, if not on this occasion, then at some convenient time in the near future?

We have rightly taken a very strong line in condemning Soviet violations of the sovereignty of the Afghan people and the genocide practised by Russian colonialists in that territory. We certainly would not abstain on any United Nations' resolution condemning Soviet aggression in Afghanistan. We do not rush to sell the Soviet Union any arms, whether or not they can be used against civilian populations, and we certainly do not press them to accept economic aid.

The Indonesian Ambassador has written to me saying that I would not be permitted to visit East Timor in my capacity as Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group. Will the Government use their best endeavours in the United Nations and elsewhere to set on foot an investigation of Indonesian misrule in East Timor, as the United Nations have done already in the case of, for example, the Israeli-occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza? Will the Government reaffirm our policy that ultimately the people of East Timor must be allowed to exercise their right of self-determination, which is enshrined in the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of which I believe Indonesia is a signatory? And will they, in the meanwhile, reconsider their policy of assiduously cultivating friendly relations with a state which commits crimes against humanity which dwarf those committed by the USSR?

6.51 p.m.

Lord Brockway: My Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Avebury, has made a very comprehensive factual statement, and only briefly do I want to support him in his plea to the Government. Many of us have great admiration for Indonesia. There was its magnificent resistance to Japanese occupation, and then its splendid courage in seeking its own national independence from Dutch occupation. Many of us felt at that time that it had set a precedent to very many other nations. We became deeply disappointed after the *coup*, when the Indonesian Government imprisoned thousands of people and when we became aware of the reports of Amnesty International, and others who had visited Indonesia, of what was happening to many of those in prison, and of the allegations of torture. That disillusionment with Indonesia was accompanied by its policy in East Timor. At first the Indonesian Government said that the attacks upon the people of East Timor were by their neighbours on the island, but

later they acknowledged that they were engaged in the occupation.

I am speaking tonight because at that time I was very much involved in discussions in this House about what Indonesia was doing in East Timor. I put repeated Questions to my noble friend Lord Goronwy-Roberts. Let me say that I deeply regret his ill-health because I am quite sure that if it had been physically possible he would have participated in our debate tonight. But your Lordships have only to look up the *Official Report* to see the Questions which I put to Lord Goronwy-Roberts and the Answers which he gave to me. More than once he said that the Government at that time were absolutely in favour of self-determination by the peoples of East Timor. Not only that, but our representative on the Security Council of the United Nations had taken the initiative to raise the matter there, with the result that a supporting resolution was carried and the Security Council asked the Secretary General to visit East Timor to find out the facts. I have no doubt whatsoever that the intentions of our Foreign Office representatives on the Front Bench at that time, both in this House and in another place, were to demand the self-determination of the people of East Timor.

It is very disturbing indeed if, at the same time as those assurances were being given in Parliament, officers abroad, and particularly an ambassador, were making statements and pursuing policies which were a denial of what was quite sincerely urged on the Front Benches as the policy of Her Majesty's Government. I agree with my noble friend Lord Avebury that that demands some investigation. Unless Foreign Office officials abroad are reflecting the policy which is stated in this House and another place, they are sabotaging the efforts which the Front Benches are making.

I remember that time very acutely. I remember how disturbed we were when Henry Kissinger, for the United States, declared in favour of the actions of Indonesia. Henry Kissinger, seeking to mobilise all over the world opposition to communist régimes, was inclined to think that any resistance to any Government which was sympathetic to the West was naturally communist; and, with no evidence at all that the national opposition of the people of Eastern Timor was communist inclined, he dismissed it as a communist resistance and endorsed the attitude of Indonesia. I am not surprised that the recent revelations of correspondence which passed have indicated that the United States supported Indonesia in its occupation of East Timor.

I acknowledge at once that I do not have the same evidence about Australia. I had not seen it before the publication of these recent documents, but I suppose that in the case of Australia one must also accept the fact that that vast white island was fearful of what would happen in South-East Asia, in case developments there meant that many Asians might penetrate their island. But, in addition to saying that, I want to say very firmly as a journalist that Her Majesty's Government ought to resist very strongly indeed any efforts at censorship of publications in this country. The federal Government in Australia has not only brought court proceedings against newspapers there which sought to serialise the book published by the two Australian Governments; it has brought an action even against a publication in this country of the responsibility and authority of the *New Statesman*. I think that, fortunately, their legal letter did not arrive in time and the *New Statesman* had already published most of its edition—a few more than 600 did not appear because of the communication from the Federal Government. The High Court in Australia has now decided on the right of newspapers to publish the information which is in this book and in these documents. All that the High Court of Australia has said is that there must not be quotations which would infringe copyright. I hope that that judgment by the High Court in Australia will enable the *New Statesman* in this country to publish the facts which are in that book and in that document.

Secondly, I not only ask this Government to resist these tendencies towards censorship but I ask whether the Government will raise this matter at the United Nations Security Council. Ought not there to be an investigation as to what is going on in East Timor? There has been an almost complete boycott of news coming out of that territory since the Indonesian forces marched in and repressed the nationalist movement there. The time has come for this; because such reports as we have received indicate that resistance is still bravely being made to this external occupation. I am asking the Government whether they will not take the initiative to see that this matter is raised in the United Nations Security Council so that we may know the facts of the present situation.

7.2 p.m.

Baroness Vickers: My Lords, I am sorry that tonight two noble Lords have raised this Unstarred Question so long after the events. I have had the opportunity of going to Timor and I have been visiting Indonesia ever since 1945–46. I was there with the allied forces and saw then how many difficulties there were and how many people got injured and killed—which is usual when the people of a country are struggling to get their independence. We, as allies, were there to keep the peace on behalf of the Dutch. I understand the difficulties, but I resent one or two things which were said by noble Lords.

Having been to Timor, I can assure the noble Lord, Lord Avebury, that the people were not herded into the mountains. They went there for two or three reasons. One was that they were being conscripted by the Portuguese to go to Mozambique, in many cases and also they were frightened of what was happening elsewhere. But they were not hearded at all. I should like to say, too, that I do not think that at the moment he has much to fear about sales, because, owing to the textile dispute, the Indonesians have stopped taking our goods. I believe there is to be a conference about this later this month; but for the moment, anyway, it has stopped.

I resented very much the manner in which the noble Lords have spoken because I do not think that either noble Lord has been to Indonesia or to East Timor; and I am wondering whether Amnesty International ever had a representative there, either. All the quotations came from questions replied to by the then Government in power. I am sorry that the noble Lord, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, cannot be here. He would have given me quite a lot of support. I think, too, that the attack on Dr. Kissinger was unfair.

[BARONESS VICKERS.]

I should like to give a little of the background history because I do not think it is known. To consider the past history of East Timor, originally the whole island was a vassal state of the empire of Sriwija, with the capital at Palembang in Sumatra. It was in the year 1672 that all the 72 islands formed this empire. This was followed by another empire, the Mojopahet Empire, with Gazah Mada who was the Prime Minister from 1331 to 1364. About this time the Portuguese attached Malaka, in Malaya, and from there went on to other places. The Sultan of Tirnate waged war from the Maluku Islands and, together with other sultans, fought the Portuguese for many years. They did not want them there at all. Finally, the Portuguese settled in Flores Solor and Timor, and until then Timor had had its own sultan.

In 1633 the Dutch arrived—and I should have thought that the two noble Lords would have been glad to think that there is no colonisation going on at the present time. When the Dutch arrived, they only thought of the western part of Timor; the Portuguese remained in the East. Then the Japanese occupied the island in 1942 for three and a half years until they surrendered to the allied forces; and the Timorese again left East Timor to the Portuguese. Before the Japanese there had been struggles against the Portuguese. In 1949 many people were massacred at Los Palos. Previous to that the people had tried to rebel. There was a rebellion in Cekusi, in 1700, and another in 1910 in another part of the island. That proves to me that they were not happy under the Portuguese rule.

The Portuguese decided in 1974 to allow political parties. It is interesting to know that there had been no political parties since 1500. They were not allowed. Perhaps with the idea of divide and rule, they had five parties: the UDT, the Fretelin, Apodita, Kota and the Trabalhista. The Portuguese supported the Fretelin and gave them arms. Why? Because they wanted them to be the leading people in the island. They were considered to be a radical element. This was very unfortunate. Talks were held before integration on 19th July, 1976 between the then Foreign Minister, that famous man Adam Malik, who later became the President of the United Nations, and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Soares, in New York. Malik, when President of the United Nations, did all he could to help.

Seven different further talks were held—Indonesia and Portugal in Lisbon in 1974, Indonesia and Portugal in London in 1975; there was the Macau conference in 1975. Then there were the two Indonesia-Portugal conferences in Jakarta in 1975; and the Rome conference also in 1975. No agreement was arrived at and so the Fretelin declared independence on 28th November 1975. Then the other four political parties followed the Fretelin. A decision was taken for the integration by the People's Assembly, an elected assembly, in Jakarta, May 1976. Fighting has been mentioned and of course the reports of numbers of deaths vary. There were no permanent troops, I understand, in East Timor. They were brought in as and when necessary.

The civil war had lasted about four years and I gather that there were about 60,000 dead. Then the Portuguese Governor and his officials fled from the capital, Dili Atauro to the island of Atauro in 1975. The Portuguese then asked the Indonesian Government to send a ship to help them to evacuate and to provide food. This was done. But in a very short time they abandoned the island, leaving a vacuum in East Timor. In 1976, as I mentioned before, the final integration then took place. During the final period of Portuguese rule, as I mentioned, many people fled to the mountains to avoid being conscripted. It is rather interesting to note that the present Vice-Governor, who is Portuguese, of East Timor was sent to Mozambique to fight with the guerrillas. No wonder that the people went to the mountains; they did not wish to receive that treatment. He, fortunately, managed to get away. Now, besides being the Vice-Governor, he works as a customs officer.

I was met by him and his wife on arrival and I called on the Governor, a Portuguese, who was installed in 1976. This is rather interesting: he is at last learning the Indonesian language, having married a charming Javanese girl who is giving him quite a lot of help.

The Indonesian Government have spent since 1976 £380 million for education, housing and health. The Portuguese used to spend about £6 million a year. There is only one main tarmac road and a lack of piped water. Even the hotel I stayed in had no piped water. Some of the money that I mentioned goes for youth organisations, rural development, agricultural equipment and, for the young, to the scouts and guides. The last day that I was there I went to an exhibition in Dili. The population of Dili is about 16,000 and it was reckoned that there were 8,000 people there. I was able to move about freely, and I was very interested to see the voluntary organisations which have been set up and the part that the young were playing. I felt completely safe walking about. There was a competition and I was asked to present the prizes.

Australia are now going to build them new schools because 90 per cent. of the people were illiterate under Portuguese rule. I should like also to mention that family reunions have been made by the Australians for 99 people. But Portugal itself is reluctant to have any people back again because they have so many refugees from Mozambique. It seems extraordinary to me that the population after hundreds of years should be so badly looked after—90 per cent. illiterate and less than 10 per cent. had ever been to university.

East Timor is stated to have the highest percentage of malaria and TB in the world. They have been suffering from skin diseases, gastro-enteritis and malnutrition. No wonder they wanted to be free and get the Indonesians to look after them in a better way. I had an hour with the Red Cross, including the International Red Cross, the Swiss. They have done an excellent job especially in the outlying districts which are very difficult to get to. They have to use small planes to get food and supplies in because the roads are so bad. There has been a very bad drought. At present they have eight or nine medical teams, with one medical doctor and two para-medical workers in each team, for outlying districts. An excellent card system has been started using different colours according to the type of nourishment needed. Therefore people are able to come along and get the necessary

vitamins that they need. The Indonesian Red Cross will continue this health programme.

In regard to religion—and we have heard so much about persecution—like the rest of Indonesia, anybody can follow which religion they like. Despite the fact that the Roman Catholics have been there for most of the time that the Portuguese have been there, most of the people are Animists in East Timor.

In principle, foreign journalists are allowed to visit. Three visited this year from Associated Press, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Zurich Daily News*. In view of what I have said in regard to the struggle for independence over hundreds of years, the unfortunate state of Timor is now very much better off. It is better off now but it could not have been worse off. We say, "Let the people decide". The Timorese did decide, and I met at a meeting 24 people, five Portuguese. There were no officials present. There were also Arabs and Chinese present and they expressed themselves to be better off and happy with the existing conditions. I emphasise that no official was present. I had an interpreter. I can still understand quite a lot of the language but of course I am out of practice and it was better to have an interpreter.

I should like to defend the action taken by Sir Archibald Ford. We do not want to interfere in the affairs of other people's countries, especially when revolutions are going on in various parts of the world and considering all the difficulties that we had when the allied Forces were there. Although we were able to keep the country fairly quiet, the Indonesians still wanted their independence. When we left they fought the Dutch and obtained their independence. I think that it is very unfortunate that we have this debate today. We want all the friends that we can have in the world and I do not think that this debate is going to be helpful in keeping future friendships. I do not think that it has done any good raking up things which we have heard about or read about and about which neither of the noble Lords have any definite proof because they have not been there and seen things for themselves.

7.18 p.m.

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, first I should like to thank the noble Lord, Lord Avebury, for his commiserations following my little bump last night, and for raising this matter which gives us an opportunity to consider this subject. I will answer the second part of the noble Lord's Question first, and then return to describe more fully Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the territory. As your Lordships will be aware, it has not been the general practice of successive Governments to publish documents containing confidential advice other than in the context of the 30 year rule. This applies whether or not they have appeared in the press, here or abroad. There is no reason to depart from this principle in the present case, nor do I intend to comment on the contents of the documents in question.

I turn now to East Timor itself. East Timor has always been a remote territory, short of all typse of infrastructure and natural resources. The underdevelopment of the territory before 1975 is not contested. It is regrettably true that there has been, in East Timor, enormous loss of life and the emergence of a huge number of refugees.

In such territories this is the almost inevitable consequence of a period of political chaos such as that of the mid-1970s. There can be no doubt that the Indonesian intervention of December 1975 contributed significantly to the territory's recent social and human problems. But I must say that there is no good evidence to support allegations that the Jakarta Government pursued a policy of genocide, or of any deliberate intention on their part to cause suffering to the inhabitants of the territory. The Indonesian Government, stretched as it is to govern an already poor and populous country, could not possibly expect to reap any advantage from such a policy.

Moreover, I think it essential to put the Indonesian intervention into perspective. In June 1975 Fretilin members had refused to attend a constitutional conference in Macau and seemed to prefer to pin their hopes on developments in Lisbon rather than the balance of political forces, such as they were, in the territory itself. They demand complete independence immediately, while other groups preferred a transitional period. This attitude seems to have been responsible for the seizure of power by the other parties in August of that year. In response, Fretilin seized the arms of the remaining Portuguese army units and suppressed all opposition in the territory. Their political opponents fled to West Timor in Indonesia and were followed there by many thousands of refugees in the succeeding weeks. An Australian Council for Overseas Aid assessment in October 1975 suggested that at least 2,000 lives had already been lost in the civil war. Yet the Indonesian Government did not decide to intervene until Fretilin's Unilateral Declaration of Independence of 28th November. I make these points not to justify the Indonesian intervention, but to point out that the situation in the territory was extraordinarily confused and that Fretilin itself has never been able to substantiate its claim to represent the East Timorese people as a whole.

As I am sure the noble Lord, Lord Avebury, is aware, the Indonesian Government has in recent years allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross, in co-operation with the Indonesian Red Cross and the Catholic Relief Services, to work in East Timor. For a long time the distribution of food throughout the dislocated territory was both difficult and inefficient, particularly to those who had fled to remote regions to escape the fighting. But the ICRC had indicated by the end of 1979 that the situation had much improved and that they were satisfied with the support given to thier efforts by the Indonesian authorities. Their reports, and those of journalists who have visited the area, suggest that extreme poverty and malnutrition are the real problems and that they are now being tackled with vigour and considerable success. This is no doubt due in part to the very much reduced level of fighting in East Timor in the last two years. I acknowledge, however, that impartial information is indeed hard to obtain, and the British Government will continue to urge the Indonesian authorities to make it easier for visitors and others to go there.

May I turn now to some of the points made during the course of the debate. The noble Lord, Lord Avebury, in his opening speech raised a number of points, including in particular the question of British

[LORD TREFGARNE.]

aid to Indonesia. Despite the success of the Soeharto Government in improving Indonesia's living standards, it still remains one of the poorer developing countries. That is recognised by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and indeed all OECD countries. Britain is not one of the major aid donors. Our current contribution is running at about £8 million a year, although because of public expenditure restraints we were unable to make a new capital pledge this year Our aid contributes to improving the lot of many poor people, particularly in rural areas.

The noble Lord, Lord Avebury, also referred, as did the noble Lord, Lord Brockway, to the problems of human rights in general and torture in particular in Indonesia. It is fair to say, I think, that the Indonesian régime is indeed authoritarian by our standards but it is very concerned about security, particularly, I gather, as regards Muslim extremists. Given the history of separatism and turbulence in the country, that is understandable. We do not consider the violation of human rights in Indonesia as a whole to be comparable with that in many other states in the area. The human rights position has greatly improved with, for example, the release of virtually all political prisoners at the end of 1979. On the other hand, I should not want to pretend that the situation is by any means perfect.

The noble Lord, Lord Avebury, also referred to the specific incident of the journalists, who were said to have been murdered by Indonesian soldiers. We have bever received a conclusive report about the deaths of those journalists. The circumstances of their deaths are still not clear. Contemporary reports which reached Her Majesty's Government through Jakarta suggested they had been caught in cross-fire when a mortar hit the house in which they were sheltering.

The noble Lord, Lord Avebury, also asked about the sale of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia. It is true that eight Hawk aircraft have been sold. These are for training purposes only and are not suited to operational use in East Timor, particularly given the small number of the remaining active opposition there. In any event, Indonesians already possess different aircraft much better suited for the ground attack role.

My noble friend Lady Vickers in what, if I may say so, I thought was an impressive speech—which only went to show, I suggest, that there are two sides to any question—painted a picture which was very different from that painted by the noble Lords, Lord Avebury and Lord Brockway. My noble friend clearly speaks from detailed and recent experience. She referred to the current difficulties arising out of the textile dispute, particularly in relation to the Hawker Siddeley 748 aircraft, which she raised during the debate on foreign affairs which we had a week or two ago. I am sorry to say that it is true that British Aerospace has lost the contract for the sale of two Hawker Siddeley 748 aircraft for the Indonesian State Airline. This will, we believe, now go to Fokker. British Aerospace are now unlikely to get the contract for a further eight aircraft which the airline will need for their re-equipment programme. Negotiations over two Hawker Siddeley 748 Coastguarders are currently stalled due to the textile dispute—the same textile dispute—and therefore we can have no indication of what the outcome will be.

The noble Lord, Lord Avebury, also referred several times, as did the noble Lord, Lord Brockway, to the Australian legal action against the *New Statesman*. I understand the Australians have taken out an injunction against the *New Statesman*, alleging breach of copyright in respect of certain documents. This must clearly be a matter for the Australian Government, but I can say that the Australian High Commission has kept us informed as to what is going on.

I turn now to the international aspects. Successive British Governments have not felt able to recognise the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia. It is unacceptable to us that a territory can be taken over by force, whatever the previous situation there may have been. We cannot believe that an act of self-determination could properly have taken place in the conditions prevailing immediately after the Indonesian intervention, when substantial fighting was still going on and a large proportion of the territory's population had become refugees. The United Kingdom therefore voted for the United Nations Security Council's resolutions of 1975 and 1976, which condemned the Indonesian intervention and reaffirmed the right of the East Timorese to self-determination. But, in common with the previous Administration, we have found that resolutions tabled in the United Nations General Assembly in subsequent years have been unconstructive. In the first place, they have always prejudged the result of a process of self-determination by assuming that the people of the territory would favour an independent status. They have also given undue emphasis to Fretilin—a group which, as I explained earlier, we cannot accept as representative of the East Timorese people as a whole. Moreover, the resolutions have had no effect on the situation in the territory, and have done nothing to improve the condition of its inhabitants.

We believe that the conditions required for the definitive exercise of self-determination in accordance with the Security Council resolutions can be created only through co-operation between the two Governments directly concerned, those of Portugal and Indonesia. We have, therefore, with out partners in the European Community, abstained on the General Assembly resolutions. Of course, we welcome recent reports of willingness by the Portuguese and Indonesian Governments to work to resolve the problems bilaterally. In this context, we are prepared to do what we can to help. My Lords, the question of East Timor is a complex one on which simple conclusions are dangerous. Our hope is that the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal will together take steps to comply with the views of the Security Council. I can assure your Lordships that the British Government would support any such moves.

Written Answers

WILLIAMS v. HOME OFFICE: DOCUMENTS

Lord Avebury asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will deposit in the Library of the